

Message Text

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51

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 ACDA-19 EA-11 SAJ-01 DRC-01

/165 W

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R 041700Z APR 74

FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2526

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 0197

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, AO

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IN ANGOLA

1. RELIABLE SOURCE IN PORTUGUESE HIGH COMMAND, DURING LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH CONGEN OFFICER, OFFERED FOLLOWING UPDATED INFORMATION ON MILITARY SITUATION IN ANGOLA.

2. CABINDA: ON MARCH 28 MPLA FORCES, PERSONALLY LED BY DR. AGOSTINHO NETO, LAUNCHED ONE OF HEAVIEST SHELLING ATTACKS OF WAR ON SMALL PORTUGUESE OUTPOST OF MICONGE, AT NORTHERN TIP OF CABINDA. FORTY ROUNDS OF 122 MM ROCKETS WERE FIRED AGAINST OUTPOST, WITH ONLY 6 HITTING ON OR INSIDE 2 ACRE PERIMETER. PORTUGUESE CONSIDER THEMSELVES FORTUNATE TO HAVE SUFFERED NO LOSSES: MATERIAL DAMAGE WAS LIGHT. ROCKETS ALL FIRED FROM INSIDE CONGO (BRAZZAVILLE). THIS WAS FIRST USE OF 122'S IN NORTH. ON THE TWO DAYS FOLLOWING THIS ATTACK TWO CONVOYS FROM BELIZE TO MICONGE WERE AMBUSHED, WITH TOTAL LOSSES OF 6 KIA AND 8 WIA. THREE
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PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS WERE CAPTURED. (SOURCE DID NOT KNOW IF THEY

ARE WHITE OR BLACK.) PORTUGUESE GARRISON AT QUISSOQUI ALSO HIT BY LIGHT ROCKET ATTACK, BUT NO 122'S WERE EMPLOYED. NO FOLLOW-UP GROUND ATTACKS HAVE BEEN MADE ON EITHER OF THE GARRISONS.

3. SUPPLIES: SOVIET MATERIAL STILL GOING TO NETO'S FACTION OF MPLA VIA GPITYE NOIRE IN CONGO. SOVIET MILITARY ATTACHE IN BRAZZAVILLE SUPERVISED OFF-LOADING OF RECENT SHIPMENT OF ARMS AT POINTE NOIRE FOR MPLA, SOME OF WHICH AMONG THOSE USED IN ATTACK ON MICONGE. PRC VESSEL RECENTLY DELIVERED "LARGE SHIPMENT" OF ARMS, TO FNLA AT MATADI. PORTUGUESE ASSUME CHINESE SHIPMENT EARMARKED FOR THE NEW TROOPS STILL IN TRAINING AT KINKUZU. PORTUGUESE HAVE NO HARD INTELLIGENCE ON PRESENCE OF SAM'S IN MPLA OR FNLA HANDS BUT DO KNOW THAT SIZEABLE NUMBER OF LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT WEAPONS HAVE BEEN TURNED OVER TO FNLA BY CHINA.

4. NORTHERN ANGOLA: LEVEL OF FIGHTING THERE STILL LOW. NO EVIDENCE YET OF INCREASED INFILTRATION BY FNLA, NOW EXPECTED IN LATE MAY. PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE KEEPING TABS ON SITUATION INSIDE ZAIRE BY OVERFLIGHTS (SIC) USING B-26.

5. EASTERN ANGOLA: CHIPENDA'S FACTION OF MPLA IS DORMANT. PORTUGUESE EXPECT THAT OPENING PART OF TANZAM RAILROAD WILL PERMIT SHIPMENT VIA ZAMBIA OF HEAVIER ARMS THEN HERETOFORE FEASIBLE, AND THAT THIS MAY LEAD TO RESUMPTION OF INSURGENT ACTIVITY IN EAST.

6. REINFORCEMENTS TO MOZAMBIQUE: SOURCE CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT THERE HAS BEEN ANY TRANSFER OF TROOPS FROM ANGOLA TO MOZAMBIQUE, AS HAS BEEN WIDELY REPORTED IN INTERNATIONAL PRESS (MOST RECENTLY NEWSWEEK).

7. COMMENT: OFFENSIVE FLURRY IN CABINDA APPARENTLY ATTEMPT BY NETO TO MAINTAIN CREDIBILITY WITH HIS PATRONS. IN TERMS OF LOW LEVEL OF WARFARE IN ANGOLA THE ROCKET ATTACK AND AMBUSHES ARE ONLY HARASSMENTS FOR ARMY BUT COULD BECOME SIGNIFICANT IF NETO SHOWS ABILITY TO MAINTAIN THIS PRESSURE OVER EXTENDED PERIOD AND TO EXPAND EFFORT TOWARD STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT OIL TANKS AND RIGS ON CABINDA COAST.

BASED ON OFFICIAL DENIALS HERE AND IN LOURENCO MARQUES, AS
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WELL AS LOGISTICS PROBLEMS OF TRYING TO MOVE 10,000 MEN (THAT COULD HARDLY HAVE ESCAPED NOTICE HERE AND IN MOZAMBIQUE) POST BELIEVES NO TROOP TRANSFER WAS MADE. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF WHAT LOCAL MILITARY AND OTHER OFFICIAL SOURCES HERE CONSIDER WORSENING MILITARY SITUATION IN MOZAMBIQUE, VERSUS RELATIVE QUIET PREVAILING IN ANGOLA, IT MAY BE THAT PORTUGUESE ARMY IS ROUTING NEW TROOPS FROM METROPOLE PREVIOUSLY EARMARKED FOR ANGOLA TO MOZAMBIQUE INSTEAD, WHILE ALLOWING ATTRITION HERE,

OVER MANY MONTHS, TO CHANGE FORCE LEVELS. LISBON MAY WISH TO
COMMENT ON THIS POSSIBILITY.
BRIGGS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, KIA, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LUANDA00197
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740082-0433
From: LUANDA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740466/aaaacicc.tel
Line Count: 118
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <25 FEB 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MILITARY SITUATION IN ANGOLA
TAGS: MILI, MOPS, AO, MPLA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005